

**Maternalist discourse in nursery nurse training at Wellgarth Nursery Training School
from 1911-1939: current dilemmas of class and status in historical context**

Corresponding author: Dr Jane Read

Early Childhood Research Centre

School of Education

University of Roehampton

Roehampton Lane

London

SW15 5PJ

UK

Email: j.read@roehampton.ac.uk

+44 208 392 3262

Abstract

This article explores current dilemmas of status surrounding professional roles for the early years workforce through research into training for nursery nurses at Wellgarth Nursery Training School, London, from 1911 to 1939. It interrogates the issues through the lens of vocational habitus and feminine and emotional capital and draws comparison with contemporary training for Froebel teachers. The data identify maternalist discourse as a common factor in training for Wellgarth and Froebel students, with consequences for a gendered workforce. The research demonstrates that class was the key factor in the ability to pursue a career in nursery nursing or teaching, and shaped unique professional identities. The historical perspective sets current European and English policy on early years professional roles, and the plethora of recent literature on differentiated constructions of professionalism, which problematises conceptions of professional roles as caring or teaching, within a history dating back over one hundred years.

Keywords:

Nursery nurses; Froebel teachers; training; professional roles; vocational habitus; feminine capital

Introduction

This article explores the development of training for nursery nurses through documentary analysis of textual and visual data from Wellgarth Nursery Training School in London from its foundation in 1911 to 1939, when the outbreak of war caused a hiatus in training ¹. Although trained primarily for work in private families, Wellgarth students entered a variety of institutional settings, including day care, clinics and hospitals and their training pre-figures that for nursery nurses today. The broad interpretive framework is social construction and identity formation (Gergen 2001), with particular focus on habitus and recent articulations of capital (Bourdieu 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Reay 2004a; Colley 2006; Huppatz 2009; Taggart 2011).

The issues raised are pertinent to two strands of gender and education research recently addressed in *Gender and Education* by Warin and Gannerud (2014) and Tinkler and Jackson (2014) in the special issue on gender, teaching and care. Warin and Gannerud (2014) suggest that care and education are two aspects of pedagogy, existing in a complex relationship in which gender plays an influential role. Within this relationship, the act of caring, and the values associated with it, are inextricably associated with femininity, with implications for the work regarded as 'natural' to women. In this article, maternalist discourse is identified as hegemonic in the training of students at Wellgarth; arguably, it remains so today in the training of nursery nurses, with the attendant implications for the status accorded to the profession. Research into the history of nursery nurse training adds an illuminating dimension to current debates and recent developments in European and English

¹ Originally called the Nursery Training School, it changed its name to Wellgarth Nursery Training School from 1928 and to Wellgarth Nursery Training College in 1932; it closed in 1979. In this article it is referred to as Wellgarth. The archival data which comprised the research material for this paper can be accessed at the London Metropolitan Archive.

policy on the early childhood workforce which chimes with arguments made by Tinkler and Jackson (2014) for adopting an historical approach, an 'historical sensibility'. Taking one particular narrative in the history of nursery nurse training as a lens for examining current dilemmas in professional roles entails adopting a critical perspective and identifying the (dis)continuities between past and present.

Maternalist discourse: a shared framework for carers *and* teachers

Maternalist discourse, particularly as articulated by German kindergarten pedagogue Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), has shaped professional identities of carers and early years teachers, both across the UK and internationally (Vogt 2002; Ailwood 2008; Warhurst et al 2009). The role of women as educators and moral guides of the young has a long pedigree (Hilton and Hirsch 2000; Hilton 2007). Froebel believed that the maternal instinct was present in all women, including young girls, thus framing care and education of young children as women's work; nonetheless, training was required to bring it into full consciousness and understanding (Froebel 1840). This conception, grounded in Romantic rhetoric, was conceptualized by Froebel and his followers as 'spiritual motherhood' and women's mission (Marenholtz-Bülow 1855; Allen 1982); in Steedman's discussion of the development of primary school pedagogy this became the 'mother made conscious' (1985). During the mid to late nineteenth century, spiritual motherhood quickly came to take on a classed conception, with kindergarten teaching developing as a respectable occupation for middle class women serving the needs of their own community (Read 2011a). Working class women who took up teaching roles taught the children of their own class, from 1870 in state infant schools; alternatively, they took up caring roles in crèches or as child-minders. For

infant school teachers, Froebel's high-minded spiritual conception of their role was overshadowed by the requirement to exert control over anything up to a hundred children.

Training routes for work with young children: caring and teaching: Froebelian kindergarten teachers and Wellgarth nurses²

Training for kindergarten teachers began in small private kindergartens from the 1850s and was a prime concern of the Froebel Society, founded in 1874. This function was taken over by the National Froebel Union [NFU] following its foundation in 1887. The NFU worked alongside the Froebel Society to set the curriculum for training courses and to issue Froebel Certificates and Diplomas. Although the Froebel Society had expressed interest in training for nursery nurses from the outset, it did not pursue this route, instead, focusing its efforts on teacher-training. It was only in 1892 that long-standing Froebel Society member Emily Lord founded the Norland Institute to train nursemaids for working within families. The Institute's original title, Training School for Ladies as Children's Nurses, demonstrates the intention to target middle class women (Stokes 1992; Gathorne-Hardy 2014). In 1892, Froebel Society journal *Child Life* reported on notices in the *Lady* which made it clear that a children's nurse was a role for ladies, albeit those of limited means; thus, they retained the cultural capital of their peers pursuing Froebelian teacher-training. The status of Norland nannies was evident in what quickly became an instantly recognized uniform and a demand for their employment by wealthy families (Stokes 1992). Prior to the opening of nursery nurse colleges such as Wellgarth, women from further down the social scale worked as unqualified child-minders and in crèches, until, in 1911, the Women's Industrial Council established a school in Hackney for training 'girls from the artisan class' as children's nurses (WIC.

² In the context of Wellgarth training, the term 'nurse' refers to caring for children, not a medical professional

ACC/3816/07/07/001. Daily Graphic, 1911). This represented an attempt to provide for working class girls the kind of training offered to their wealthier peers at Norland; nevertheless, Norland's targeting of middle class women illustrates a developing complexity in the class status of different professional roles undermining what had been clear-cut class distinctions.

Wellgarth Nursery Training College: training carers for the young

The Women's Industrial Council (WIC), formed in 1894 to address the working conditions of women in industry, pursued its interests through a number of initiatives. What became known as Wellgarth Nursery Training School was their second, the first being a Day Trade Scheme for girls, part of Borough Polytechnic, providing training in housecraft. The WIC spent two years deliberating the establishment of a school to provide for working-class girls the kind of training offered to their wealthier peers at Norland and originally planned to open it in Lower Clapton, a very poor part of east London (ACC/3816/07/01/004. 1911-1913), eventually finding premises in Hackney. The WIC's intentions in opening a nursery training school were two-fold, firstly, to give girls seeking work in caring for babies and young children a better understanding of their physical needs and some knowledge of child development, and, secondly, to provide a crèche for working mothers. Press coverage was wide and not confined to London, as the album of press cutting illustrates (ACC/3816/07/07/001). The *Morning Leader* (7 January 1910) and *Manchester Dispatch* (8 January 1910) specifically referred to 'poor girls' as the target for training; the *Dispatch* headed their item 'School for Nursemaids' with the subtitle, 'Girls to practice with live babies instead of dolls'. In similar vein, the *Leader* described the intention to train girls for work in middle-class families by 'supplying them with real live babies on which they can practice the arts of mothering' (22

January 1910). The first students paid ten shillings a week, to cover training, board and lodging. Wellgarth's Minutes give no account of how students were able to fund their training, although it pursued grants from the Board of Education, given it complied with articles within the Board's regulations for technical schools. Elsie Zimmern, the school's first Warden, spelt out the contribution the WIC hoped to make in the *Evening Standard*: '(t)here are several well-known institutions where "lady nurses" are trained, and these fulfil a very important function, but there are many girls who do not belong to the well-to-do and professional classes who yet would make excellent children's nurses' (December 1911. Just as there was a difference in intentions between Wellgarth and Froebelian kindergarten training - despite shared maternalist discourse, Wellgarth nurses would be carers, not teachers - so a clear class distinction was also made between the 'lady nurses' of colleges such as Norland and the 'children's nurses' of the school.

The WIC sought to give the scheme status, firstly by asking Queen Mary to permit them to use the name King Edward Nursery Training School. Although she expressed sympathy for the work of the school, the Queen rejected the request. Undeterred, the WIC sought a Matron both with the requisite knowledge and the credentials to serve as a role model for the working-class girls who were their target; the advertisement in the *Nursing Mirror* specified: '[m]ust be gentlewoman and trained Nurse, with experience of infants and young children, and have special qualification for training girls' (ACC/3816/07/07/001. April 8. 1911). The plan for a day nursery or crèche for working mothers was quickly dropped in favour of providing a residential home for babies and young children. A newspaper cutting from 1957 reported that the crèche proposal had not proved popular; possibly cost may have been a factor but no record of the fee has come to light. An alternative reason emerged in a history of the school published in the school's magazine in 1966. This asserted that the early

arrival of Dimples, a five-week old baby who was to be cared for on a daily basis by the students, identified the need for a residential scheme, rather than a crèche. Wellgarth charged five shillings a week for the 'Babies Boarding House', a fee out of reach of working-class mothers and suggesting instead the targeting of middle-class families.

Vicarious and future mothers

Zimmern described Wellgarth training as 'for life, as well as professional work' (Zimmern 1911). The preparation of the girls for motherhood, both vicarious, in their role as children's nurses, but also as future mothers, was a key theme in the school's publicity. An article headed 'New social scheme' in the *Irish Catholic*, December 1913, cited a speech by the Minister for Education in 1909 on the need for such training. This suggests that the work of the school can be seen as a response to the contemporary discourse of poor mothering (Lewis 1986; Ross 1990; Read 2011b). In this way it links with the first 'School for Mothers' which opened in St Pancras in 1913, teaching mothercraft – nutrition and the virtues of cleanliness and good habits (Davin 1978). In this respect, Zimmern's use of the term 'professional' is significant when comparing Wellgarth training with what was provided in Froebel colleges. Although there was a class distinction between enrolments at Wellgarth and Froebel, and educational requirements were very different,³ both colleges sought to achieve acknowledgment of the professional status of their students. Yet, the maternalist discourse

³ FEI applicants were required to hold a high school leaving certificate, such as the Oxford and Cambridge Senior or London University Matriculation, whereas Wellgarth entrants had received only an elementary education.

shared by both groups of students undermined these attempts because their work was associated with mothering, regarded as an instinctual drive and thus not worthy of recognition (Wise 1932; Acker 1995). Describing the school's work in 1912, *The Sign* drew attention to the issue of status and noted that raising the standing of domestic work was one of the school's aims, arguing that 'as much care and skill goes into the making of the ideal little children's nurse, and child-rearer generally, as to the making of the woman secretary or high schoolmistress' (ACC/3816/07/07/001. *The Sign*. 1912). This critique illuminates contemporary debates about the perceived value of women's working roles:

The day is surely passing when book-work was exalted above hand-work, and it will come more and more to be seen that the brain which can cook, wash, mend, make, nurse, think, order and organize is just as high in its way, and infinitely more necessary to the community than that which can remember, calculate, reason, lecture and criticise (ACC/3816/07/07/001. *The Sign*. 1912)

Caring was a profession to be pursued for its own attributes and there is no suggestion that these two differentiated roles could or should be combined. Further, some of the qualities which the author attributes to the second role were also applicable to students pursuing Froebelian teacher-training; they also engaged in handwork and other practical tasks as well as developing core teaching skills of thinking, ordering and organizing.

The move to Wellgarth Road, Hampstead

From its opening in September 1911 with two students and one baby, the school quickly outgrew its premises in its large house in Hackney. By 1913, with twenty-two students and fifteen children, it was evident that larger premises were required. The school committee approached Henrietta Barnett, Honorary Manager of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust [HGS] and an initiator of the development of HGS, for permission to develop purpose-built

accommodation on a site in Wellgarth Road, a location which would provide the sort of conditions students might meet in future employment. Barnett had intended to include a nursery school in the Garden Suburb scheme and supported the move to Wellgarth Road; however, objections were raised by residents in a deputation to the Trust citing the 'industrial school which it is now proposed to dump down upon this pleasant spot' (ACC/3816/07/07/001. *Finchley Mail*, March 26 1915). Arguments were based on the intended residential nature of the suburb, depreciation in property values and 'the personal inconvenience and annoyance caused by the presence of a large number of children and nurses' (ibid). Opponents made no specific reference to the class of the students but the designation 'industrial school' suggests that this may have been a factor, nonetheless, the objections were rejected and the new school built in Wellgarth Road, hence the name of the school. Despite this opposition, some local residents began to see possible benefits and raised the question of opening a kindergarten, a proposal accepted by the College Committee. These plans were shelved largely because of Henrietta Barnett's opposition and because the legal situation was unclear. The reasons for Barnett's opposition remain unexplained and are in contrast to her original plans for a nursery. Possibly, she concurred with the income tax authorities who questioned the school's charitable status in the late 1920s; subsequently, the school chose to alter its Articles of Association, removing non-charitable activities and retaining only those connected with the training of nurses.

Wellgarth's conception of professional training: practical with a bit of theory on the side

The training provided at Wellgarth was primarily practical, with time divided between caring for babies and young children, cooking and laundry-work, all on a rotating basis and giving students the range of experience required for work in a private house. Babies and young

children were divided into families, and lived in separate nurseries, each containing two or three cots and a bed for the students who took it in turns to sleep in the room with the babies (ACC/3816/07/07/001. Anon 1916). Students also attended lectures on child nature and carried out observations at the mother and baby consultations led by Eric Pritchard, the foremost paediatrician of the period, at St Marylebone General Dispensary, the first infant welfare clinic in London. Pritchard was a pioneer of infant feeding techniques and served as the Wellgarth's consultant physician and examiner for mothercraft. In the late 1920s, Wellgarth began to take in nursing mothers from Queen Mary's maternity home who had either premature babies or twins, or babies with feeding difficulties; some were sent by Pritchard, choosing the opportunity for close observation provided by residential care Wellgarth rather than an infants hospital.

In 1926 *Nursery World* described the training as lasting from eight to twelve months and consisting of lectures on simple psychology and modern methods of education, including Montessori, Froebel and kindergarten games, and P.N.E.U. [Parents National Education Union]. The educational work was developed further in 1927 with the appointment of a Mistress of Education and the establishment of an Educational Library. Alongside the study of early childhood pioneers, students also had regular periods of nursery school work within the school (ACC/3816/07/07/003. 1961). In this way Wellgarth ensured that its students were able to meet the holistic developmental needs of their charges in training that challenged the care/education dichotomy and, in a limited way, blurred the distinction with Froebelian training.

Both the length and the nature of Wellgarth training continued to represent a significant difference in comparison with that for Froebel students. Throughout the period from 1911 to 1939, it remained substantially less than the three-year course undertaken by FEI students and, despite the introduction of educational studies, examinations were

principally practical, in home nursing, needlework, handicraft and housecraft, child study and mothercraft. On leaving Wellgarth, students received personal report books setting out the length of training, grades in examinations and coursework, and assessment of personal qualities. Emphasis was placed on punctuality, neatness, adaptability, courtesy, patience and sympathy, and their general capability and working methods. Report books also recorded the time spent with children of different age groups, for example, 'time spent in Nurseries: 32 weeks, with Children 5 years to 18 months - 13 weeks...' (ACC/3816/07/03/003). Nursery management skills were assessed according to practical and personal qualities of ability in working with children with regard to their happiness, sense of responsibility, interest in their work and tidiness and cleanliness (ibid). No reference was made to competencies associated with teaching, instead, they reflected the attributes which contemporary critics regarded as largely absent in working-class mothers.

Wellgarth's links with teacher training

The School's Minutes indicate that Wellgarth was recognized by the Froebel Society, the Royal Sanitary Institute and Kings College for Women as suitable for providing courses of practical training for both nursery school teachers and health visitors, in conjunction with attendance at lectures at the 'home' institutions. This suggests that while Wellgarth's practical training was valued, the content of the lectures received by its students was not regarded as of sufficient calibre for students at more academic institutions.

The link with the Froebel Society emerged in the WIC Minutes in December 1917 in connection with training for nursery school work; the discussions, which continued in 1918,

presaged the passage of the 1918 Education Act, with its permissive clause empowering local education authorities to establish nursery provision for the poorest children. The WIC minutes illuminate the Froebel Society's interest in developing training for nursery school work in anticipation of a demand for nursery teachers as a result of the legislation. The Froebel Society was prepared to consider practical work at Wellgarth as part qualification for nursery school work (ACC/3816/07/01/005. January 9 1918) and a short course for teachers for nursery school work was announced in April 1918 (ACC/3816/07/01/005. April 23 1918). This provides insight into the developing conception of the nursery school teacher, as requiring knowledge of caring procedures, but alongside qualified teacher status. This effectively excluded students from Wellgarth and other nursery training colleges and reinforced the professional divide between teachers and carers at the same time as training was seen to require elements common to both roles. Nevertheless, a shared initiative with Darlington Training College brought trainee nursery and infant school teachers and Wellgarth nursery nurse students together. Darlington students came from a different social group than those studying at FEI and other Froebel colleges. For them, practical experience in the college's nursery school was supplemented by one term in London at Wellgarth where they gained experience in caring for one or two young children as well as generally helping with children aged from six months to five years resident in the school. They made visits for observations at day nurseries, crèches and nursery schools, including Rachel McMillan Open-Air Nursery School in Deptford, at Pritchard's 'Baby Consultations' in Marylebone and dental clinics, and attended lectures on hygiene at the Royal Sanitary Institute. These experiences were central to the training of the Wellgarth students and gave the Darlington trainees insight into the services provided for some of London's poorest children.

Regulating the Wellgarth student and future employee

A further distinction between Wellgarth and Froebel students emerged in the attitudes of the respective colleges to their supervision, during training and subsequently. Students normally entered Wellgarth on leaving elementary school so the school effectively served *in loco parentis*, and maintained tight control over them, both within the school and when they left the premises, on social occasions and on visits as part of their training. In common with students at other nursery training colleges, Wellgarth students were required to wear, and pay for, uniform both outdoors and indoors, during study and recreation. Discussion about uniform continued throughout the period (ACC/3816/07/01/039. 29 July 1936) and it was only much later, in the 1960s, that photographs show students not wearing uniform when off-duty. In 1916 the *Nursing Mirror and Midwives Journal*, gave details of student life, noting that they did not have holidays but were granted an occasional week-end off with a daily walk in the open air, as well as an hour off duty (ACC/3816/07/07/001. Anon 1916). Students and staff met to discuss issues at least once a term through a committee representing their interests. Many of the entries refer to 'disorderly behaviour', particularly relating to excessive noise and untidiness. Students were required to be silent during study periods and were required to request a bath; here too strict silence had to be observed (ACC/3816/07/01/039. July 1933). A student recalled in later years that they were 'allowed' to go to Church on Sunday.

Concern for local opinion emerged as a key factor underlying the rules regarding noise, evident in the warden's remark that 'it was definitely lowering to the tone of the College, when the noise was so bad that it could be heard out in the road...so much unnecessary noise was very bad training' (ACC/3816/07/01/039. 6 October 1933). Other

issues revolved around the social life of the students, for example when the wireless should be allowed, requests to go to bed early, which was granted as long as study notes were completed, and permission for social outings in winter, so that students could go out alone or in couples on free evenings. The school's long-serving second warden, Miss Talbot, kept a tight rein on student activities and required written parental consent for such outings (ACC/3816/07/01/039. 23 October 1933). When swimming baths were opened near to the Wellgarth premises, permission was sought from the college's consultant physician as to whether they should be allowed to go.

Wellgarth's regulation of its students provides a contrast to the much greater freedom enjoyed by students at the Froebel Educational Institute, although there were regulations regarding the time for returning from evening outings and overnight visitors. Partly this reflected the fact that they were around two years older on entry, but class may also have been a factor as staff and students shared cultural capital, indeed some students may have held greater capital than their tutors. The control imposed on Wellgarth students may be interpreted as preparation for their future lives as responsible carers in the homes of wealthy families, or in the strictly controlled institutional settings they entered. Arguably, it also represented a desire to eradicate any vestiges of working-class culture which might affect their employment prospects.

Roles and performances

Students from Wellgarth took up caring roles under a variety of descriptors including nanny, mothers' help, assistant nurse, staff nurse, and nursery nurse. Notes on Wellgarth's history reported that most early graduates entered private families but the school's close association

with Eric Pritchard facilitated entrance to nursing roles, in hospitals, clinics and day nurseries. As McGillivray (2008) and Harwood et al (2013) have pointed out, there are a multiplicity of descriptors for carers and early years educators; Katherine Holden's recent history of the British nanny comments on the difficulty in distinguishing between them, with some also carrying class connotations:

The fact that there were so many names for this kind of work can be confusing. Nannies, mothers' helps, lady helps, nurses, lady nurses, children's nurses, nursemaids, nursery maids, nurse/generals, nurse/housekeepers, nursery governesses, babysitters (more common in America), and au pairs were all common. Some names were markers of class – the terms 'maid' and 'lady' disappeared in the second half of the twentieth century – and some indicated whether or not housework or teaching would be part of the job. Yet matching an occupational name to a role is not straightforward, as there is much overlap.

(Holden 2012, unpaginated)

Student record books were also used to document reports from employers; regrettably the Wellgarth archives include only one such book, for Rachel Barchard, who completed her year's training in 1939 (ACC/3816/07/03/003). Data from the record book show that Barchard worked principally in private families across the UK, often in sole charge of children during the absence of mothers. Reports on her performance were uniformly complimentary. Barchard also worked in hospitals and at Wellgarth, supervising the seventy-two students in training as well as the thirty-six resident children, aged birth to seven. This detailed report of her achievements as a student and her subsequent career path up to 1969 provides a rich picture of the life of a Wellgarth graduate from the viewpoint of the school staff and her employers. Employer reports were presented to the school council and endorsed (or not), a control over subsequent professional lives completely absent for graduates from Froebel Educational Institute. Again, this arguably represents a classed perception of the need to maintain supervision of the working class Wellgarth graduates.

The archive possesses no autobiographical account by Barchard about her training and employment experiences; nor does it have any other personal papers of Wellgarth students. Nonetheless, the performances required of Wellgarth students and their conception of their role emerges from other data, including retrospective accounts written for the Jubilee magazine of the Old Girls Association in 1961. Writing in the magazine about her early experiences as a student in 1915, Florence Sillence principally recalled the move to Hampstead, which entailed making curtains and cot covers for the nurseries and the 'thrill' of the Open Day when the students' hard work was on display. Her other reminiscences were of the difficulties of the war year, particularly the financial pressures which almost led to closure, and the excellent knowledge of feeding children obtained through observations at Pritchard's Marylebone clinic. Mary Wilkins trained at Wellgarth in 1927 and visited the college in the Jubilee year of 1961. She noted how much more off-duty time students enjoyed, commenting that her cohort 'did the entire work of the college, the only outside help being the gardener' (ACC/3816/07/07/003. 1961: 13). Wilkins recalled starting work in the laundry and then 'advanc[ing] to housework and then on to under-nurse in one of the big nurseries "to try our hand with children". From there we descended to the kitchen where we did all the cooking' (ACC/3816/07/07/003. 1961: 13). Night work consisted of supervising the children, waking their nurse if they cried and stoking the boiler at 4am. As senior students they took charge of a large nursery and went to assist Pritchard at his St Marylebone Dispensary. Despite the rigours of student life and the training, Wilkins proclaimed that '

Wellgarth N.T.C. [sic] was the finest training any girl could get in one short year'. The title of Grace Bedwell's contribution to the Jubilee magazine was 'In praise of Wellgarth' and, as with other articles in this issue, 'pride' and a sense of high moral purpose is very much in evidence 'I feel I must write in praise of Wellgarth, I am grateful for all the wonderful training I have had, and am proud to belong to a College with such great traditions...We have a great responsibility..., let us, who are a part of Wellgarth do our part to uphold the high ideals, standards and high traditions of Wellgarth' (ACC/3816/07/07/003. 1961: 15). All three conceptualised their role as preparing children for the future; Sillence articulated this as a 'noble calling to make good citizens of the future' (ACC/3816/07/07/003. 1961: 7) and Wilkins as: 'caring for and making happy all sorts and conditions of the World's Children – The adults of the future' (ACC/3816/07/07/003. 1961: 7). Bedwell put it more discursively but her focus on the high moral purpose of the quasi-maternal role of the nurse is a significant link with the Froebelian conception of spiritual motherhood: 'There is a quotation: - "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world" – if that is true – let us work for Peace in the World, let us turn out the children that England and Wellgarth will be proud of' (ACC/3816/07/07/003. 1961: 15).

The archive contains a wealth of photographic evidence, including commissioned photographs, from articles in the press and Barchard's personal album with thirty-two prints from her period of training, including children at play and outings to Hampstead Heath (ACC/3816/07/06/002). Visual depictions of Wellgarth students emerge as an important element in publicising the school and records show that articles for the press were delayed until photographs were available. Images were used to portray the order and respectability of students, always in uniform, indoors and out, and in a multiplicity of caring roles with babies and young children, either one to one or in groups. They were depicted at work in the laundry, tidying up their dormitories, knitting, learning to cook, attending lectures, in formal staff, student and children groups. These images conveyed the success of the school in eradicating any possible vestige of the working-class origins of its students and, given the success of Norland in portraying its brown-suited nannies, were an important element in attracting prospective employers, both in private homes and institutions.

The success of the Wellgarth project

Indicators of the success of the Wellgarth school emerge from analysis of its Visitors' Book. The entries in the book demonstrate how quickly the school attracted attention, suggesting wide-spread interest in this new profession. It gained publicity from visits by journalists from a range of newspapers, women's magazines and practitioner journals, including the *Evening Standard*, *The Lady*, and *Maternity and Child Welfare*. Although no representative from the educational press was recorded, visitors came from schools, colleges and other organisations in the UK and globally, including the USA, Mexico and Canada, New Zealand, Japan, India, South Africa and a number of western and eastern European

(ACC/3816/07/04/001). Within the UK, representatives came from specialist schools connected with the training offered at Wellgarth, for example the National Training School for Cookery, and also from women's colleges such as King's. Day nurseries, distinguished from nursery schools by their focus on care rather than education, and centres providing services for mothers, such as the St Pancras School for Mothers also sent staff. Publicity gained from these visitors led to offers of employment in the UK and overseas, for example, *The Sign* reported in 1912 that less than a year after its opening twenty-six requests for nurses had been received, including from Hungary and Bruges alone (ACC/3816/07/07/001. *The Sign*. 1912).

Visits by London County Council education officers and government inspectors demonstrated official interest. Significantly, during discussions prior to the inclusion of clause 18 in the 1918 Education Act which permitted local education authorities to establish nursery schools in areas of need, the school was visited by H.A.L. Fisher, President of the Board of Education. Fisher's visit was about the practical training course Wellgarth was proposing to introduce for nursery school teachers and suggests recognition for the school's work and its relevance for the newly developing field of nursery education.

Apart from Norland with its different student cohort, Wellgarth was not the only nursery training school which opened to cater for this new profession; others included St Mary's, Hampstead, the Mothercraft Training College and Princess Christian, Manchester, which, like Norland, directed its efforts to 'gentlewomen' (Wright 1999). Visits from staff of other nursery training colleges presaged discussions which began in 1913 and led to the establishment of the Association of Nursery Training Colleges [ANTC] in 1925

(ACC/3816/07/07/003. 1961). Forming an association to represent and harmonise the particular interests of the eleven affiliated members was significant for the development of the profession of nursery nursing and led to what became known as the National Nursery Examination Board in 1945, and CACHE in 1993 (Wright 1999).

Habitus, capital and class in the formation of communities of practice: implications of maternalist discourse for Wellgarth nursery nurses and Froebelian teachers

In common with Froebelian trainers, promoters of the newly established Montessori courses and nursery nurse training providers, Wellgarth emphasised the significance of the early childhood period. However, perceptions of the importance of teaching young children were not universally recognised; as Wise pointed out in 1932, attitudes could be summed up as 'it doesn't matter, they only teach the babies', reflecting the low status accorded to training grounded in maternalist discourse. Nevertheless, the narratives which shape professional identities and role are complex and multi-layered with class emerging as a significant factor (Stronach et al 2002; Osgood 2005; Colley 2006; Moss 2006; Osgood 2010a; Miller, Dalli and Urban 2012). Understandings of professional role absorbed by students at Wellgarth during training, through the curriculum and the learning of performance(s), established a particular vocational habitus focused on caring rituals which distinguished them from teachers (Moss 2003; McGillivray 2008; Warhurst et al 2014; Osgood 2010b; Vincent and Braun 2011).

Habitus and capital (Bourdieu 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Reay 2000a) have proved a fruitful lens for theorists of professionalization, illuminating how professional identities are developed according to the specificities of particular learning trajectories which are accessible to some but not others. Further, habitus suggests that social subjectivity is not

taught but acquired through experience (Bourdieu 1990). These interpretive frameworks shed light on the way Wellgarth students and those training to be Froebelian teachers absorbed and replicated particular performances as early years workers with distinct communities of practice (Wenger 1999), despite the shared discourse of maternalism.

Data on student enrolment at Wellgarth and at the most prestigious of the Froebel colleges, the Froebel Educational Institute [FEI], highlight the role played by class in training routes. Unlike their contemporaries pursuing teaching careers at Froebelian colleges (Smart 2006; Read 2011a), Wellgarth students principally came from working-class or lower middle-class families. Through teaching, practical work and social activities, both groups of students were able to locate themselves within a particular professional landscape and recognise those who were 'other' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Identifying those who are 'other' frequently has negative implications, and Fenech and Sumsion have pointed out that debates about professionalism can result in a hegemonic "'othering' of less qualified or non-accredited practitioners' (2007, cited in Miller and Cable 2010: 4).

Through the study of texts and the learning of the performances associated with their roles, Wellgarth and FEI students absorbed particular dispositions of thinking and of being about their roles as carers and educators of young children. These embodied distinctive orthodoxies, or *doxa*, to use Bourdieu's term (Throop and Murphy 2002), and supported development of a collective identity. While conventional understandings of cultural capital, deriving from class, applied only to students at prestigious Froebel colleges such as FEI, more recent interpretations of habitus and capital have identified dispositions more specific to the attributes of Wellgarth students. Vocational habitus is particularly apt in interrogating the

development of professional identity in Wellgarth students as it 'proposes that the learner aspires to a certain combination of dispositions demanded by the vocational culture. It operates in disciplinary ways to dictate how one should properly feel, look and act, as well as the values, attitudes and beliefs that one should espouse' (Colley et al., 2003, 488). As I have pointed out above, Wellgarth imposed a regulatory regime on its students, controlling behaviour both within the school and in the public sphere.

Huppatz (2009) has delineated a gendered interpretation of capital which argues that female capital accrues from the association of caring with women. Further, within the workplace, these feminine qualities serve as cultural capital. However, given the focus on the feminine here, these forms of capital are problematic for the acquisition of status, a point equally applicable to emotional capital (Reay 2000, 2004b; Zembylas 2007; O'Brien, 2008; Taggart 2011). Colley (2006) notes, in particular, the instrumental use of emotional capital as a professional competence to be acquired by nursery nurses where it is tied to profit, thereby problematising caring's moral and ethical value (O'Brien 2007). These wider interpretations of habitus and capital inform our understanding of identity formation, and its consequences, for both Wellgarth and FEI students; the social learning of professional practices enables individuals to see themselves as part of a community, which both reflects and is constitutive of identity and establishes traditions of practice. At the same time, habitus and capital can also serve to reinforce professional boundaries and operate against the development of an integrated workforce, as this historical data demonstrates.

Professional roles in the early years workforce: the long view and the current European and English context

A growing body of literature has addressed the question of what constitutes professionalism in the early years workforce (Moss 2006; Moss 2008; Osgood 2009; Osgood 2010a; Miller and Cable 2010; Osgood 2010b; Simpson 2010; Vincent and Braun 2011). Since 1999, with the issuing that year of the Bologna declaration by twenty-nine European education ministers, those deliberations have taken place within the context of Europe-wide developments with the aspiration to create a harmonized higher education system (Oberhuemer, Schreyer and Neuman 2010; Van Laere, Peeters and Vandenbroeck 2012). More recently, the link between a skilled workforce and quality outcomes for children has been made in the European Commission's *Eurydice Policy Brief. Early Childhood Education and Care* (EU 2014) which identified three categories of staff employed in direct contact with children, together with commonly held qualifications:

- educational staff, usually qualified at tertiary level (Bachelor level);
- care staff, with a minimum qualification at upper-secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary level; and
- auxiliary staff /assistants, usually either unqualified or with a minimum qualification at upper secondary level.

These reflect what have long been traditions of practice in the UK and the Wellgarth students who are the focus of this research occupy the second category. Although Van Laere, et al (2012) argue that European policy conceptualises ECEC as holistic - education and care are unitary, not binary - *Eurydice* notes that in practice there is an ongoing tendency to 'allocate 'educational' work for older children to qualified staff, and 'care' for the younger ones to less qualified staff' (EU 2014, p.15). Similarly, European ECEC structures are

diverse, with some continuing to reify the split between care and education in differentiated systems (Van Laere, et al 2012), although *Eurydice* suggests these are diminishing in number. These developments potentially have significant implications for England, at a point of new iterations of qualifications for early years professionals. Training for the roles of Early Years Educators [EYEs] at Level 3 and Early Years Teachers [EYTs] at Level 6 (DfE 2013) ⁴ commenced in September 2014, following traditional historical divisions represented by Wellgarth and similar nursery nurse colleges, and Froebelian and mainstream teacher-training providers, but with a significant change of title for the former.

Students at Wellgarth were prepared for caring roles and took qualifications which were predecessors to those now offered by the Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education [CACHE] for EYEs; the posts they took up reflected the conception of their work as 'care', as nurses and nursery nurses, albeit that their training included elements which were educational. Regardless of whether the education/care dichotomy is meaningful, this historical discontinuity in the title of roles illuminates the political intervention in the early childhood sector, and in education more generally, in England, which is currently blurring the lines between the professional identity of the teacher, as educator, and support workers, as 'carers' (Warhurst et al 2014). The increasing politicization of workforce development, both Europe-wide and locally within England, has only served to make the task of bringing clarity and cohesion to an already complex arena more demanding. Cathy Nutbrown's review of early education and childcare qualifications, *Foundations for Quality* (DfE 2012), provided the framework for the government's proposals set out a year later in *More Great Childcare* (DfE 2013). Nutbrown subsequently lambasted the proposals for watering down her

⁴ Level 3 is a non-tertiary level qualification equivalent to Year One, or HE1, of a UK degree course, and Level 6 to Year 3 or HE3. Prior to 2013, the Children's Workforce Development Council oversaw qualifications at Level 6 for achievement of Early Years Professional Status in connection with Foundation and Bachelor degree programmes. I am grateful for the comments of a Reviewer on this point

recommendations; in her response, *Shaking the Foundations of Quality*, Nutbrown asked questions pertinent to this study:

So, what is the difference between a ‘teacher’ and an ‘educator’? Do teachers not ‘educate, and care, and support, and guide, and observe, and talk with parents’? And do not early years educators do those things too? (Nutbrown, 2013, 7)

Indeed, the whole notion of professionalism and professional identity is fraught with pitfalls for those attempting to grasp its essence (Urban 2008; Cable and Miller 2010; Miller, Dalli and Urban 2012). This difficulty is reflected in the language of professional roles within the workforce (Adams 2008) – teacher, nursemaid, nanny, nursery nurse, nursery worker, practitioner, early years professional, and now early years educator and early years teacher. The multiplicity of titles creates anxiety and unease as individuals seek to situate themselves within a diverse workforce and it is questionable whether the new titles will serve to bring clarity within the English workforce.

Concluding reflections: (dis)continuities in past/present conceptualisations of caring roles

The data from Wellgarth present nursery nursing, under a variety of names, as a feminine profession grounded in long-established gendered and classed conceptions of roles. The class dimension of Wellgarth’ students differentiated them from Froebelian trainees, who were firmly grounded in the wealthier ranks of the middle-class. Class continues to be a significant dimension of caring roles today, where it sits in a tripartite structure with emotional capital and gender (Reay 2000, 2004b; Osgood 2005; Colley 2006). Feminine capital accrues from the emotional labour implicit in caring roles, yet this very quality undermines their status, a factor which also impacted on perceptions of teachers of young

children who share responsibility for care as well as education. Wellgarth promoted vocational habitus in its students during an intense training in the practicalities of childcare and household management. In this way, it reflected contemporary discourse that working-class girls required such training, a contrast with recent research findings which identified confidence in today's childcare trainees who articulated a view of their work as common sense and not something which, at root, required training (Vincent and Braun 2011). The school sought to build status for its students and to instill a sense of personal and professional responsibility through close control of their lives, during training and subsequently. Students gained a powerful conception of the high moral purpose of their role in preparing the citizens of the future. Implicit in this is an irony, that these working-class girls were largely destined to care for the children of the wealthy, to prepare them for their lives as future citizens, in some cases possibly destined for responsible positions in the politico-economic sphere.

The historical data presented here suggests that current aims to achieve re-envisioned and integrated workforce is, as the plethora of literature on professionalism suggests, a challenge; indeed, some argue instead for a more fluid concept of professionalism(s). A second concern at the heart of current policy is to raise the status of work with young children, yet it is questionable whether new terminology for the English workforce, which simply excludes reference to caring, will achieve this laudable aim. As long as early years roles are articulated in maternalist rhetoric which proposes both the naturally feminine nature of the work and the moral value of emotional labour, it is unlikely that high status (intellectual, professional, financial) will accrue. Ultimately, until caring and training for carers is recognized in the socio-political sphere as a competency with equal capital to teaching and sharing essential elements, with recognition in parity of pay and qualification, little hope of achieving these aims seems likely. Yet, for Wellgarth students and today's

childcare trainees, caring is an end worthy in itself and of significance in shaping the future adult, not a lesser version of women's work.

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